



UNITED STATES SENATOR ★ SERVING THE CITIZENS OF IDAHO

LARRY CRAIG

[HTTP://CRAIG.SENATE.GOV/PRESS/](http://craig.senate.gov/press/)

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
January 4, 2007

Dan Whiting (202) 224-8078
Sid Smith (208) 342-7985

Trial of a Tyrant
by Senator Larry Craig

In mid-December 1989, a rebellion took hold in communist-ruled Romania, and quickly gained momentum. Within days, anti-government demonstrations spun out of control, and dictator Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife were forced to flee the capital of Bucharest. Though they eluded angry mobs for several days, the Ceausescus were eventually caught and executed on Christmas Day.

Such a quick and violent end is not uncommon when a dictator is overthrown. And that's what makes the trial and execution of Saddam Hussein so remarkable.

Let's put aside much of the debate about U.S. involvement in Iraq for a moment and focus on Saddam Hussein himself. Anyone who regularly watches the History Channel has probably seen at least one documentary on the genocides and mass murders Saddam carried out while in power.

He ordered the Iraqi military to systematically bombard the Kurdish town of Halabja with chemical weapons, resulting in the deaths of more than 5,000 men, women and children. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis were murdered by Saddam and his followers, and new mass graves all over Iraq are uncovered almost every day, more than three years after coalition forces invaded.

I could go on about his brutality, but the point is made that Saddam Hussein clearly needed to be brought to justice. Having said that, it is important that we demonstrate to the Middle East and the world the difference between a republican democracy, governed by the rule of law, and a strongman dictatorship. It is also important that the new Iraqi government demonstrated this to Iraqis themselves, sending a message that a brutal chapter in their national history is over, and life has changed for the better.

While Saddam Hussein's trial may not have been perfect, for the most part, it was conducted professionally and openly, and it met international standards of justice. The execution phase encountered serious problems, as Saddam was taunted before his sentence was carried out, and unauthorized video footage of the event has been circulated. The Bush Administration has correctly voiced concerns to the Iraqi government, and the Iraqis are investigating.

In the end, White House spokesman Tony Snow put it into perspective, saying, "There seems to be a lot of concern about the last two minutes of Saddam Hussein's life and less about the first 69 (years), in which he murdered hundreds of thousands of people. That's why he was executed."

[MORE]

History will prove that the removal, trial, and execution of Saddam Hussein was justified, and I believe it has helped lay more of the ground work for a stable and democratic Iraq. Will Saddam's passing be a magic bullet that will quell the violence in Iraq? No, of course not. It may even be used as an excuse for extremists to commit more violence in the days and weeks to come. But it obviously removes any hope his loyalists may have had of restoring the man to power.

It bears repeating that stability and democracy in Iraq will not spring up overnight. It has been – and will continue to be – a long, difficult process.

Saddam Hussein's trial and execution are essential steps in that process. They are important signals that power now rests with the people, who elect leaders to write the laws, and that true justice comes from the rule of law. It will no longer come from a strongman or the whim of a mob.